

Supporting Access to Higher Education for Afghans (SCAKAB-23-CA-008-SCA-06012023)
Questions and Answers Document

- 1) **Question:** Is Institution of Higher Education eligible? There is language in the NOFO that asks for proof of non-profit status. Do Institutions of Higher Education have to prove non-profit status?

Answer: This opportunity is open to all types of applicants (except individuals) including institutions of higher education. Proof of non-profit status is required only if an applicant claims non-profit status.

- 2) **Question:** Is this opportunity available for small businesses to submit?

Answer: This opportunity is open to all types of applicants except for individuals. Small businesses are eligible to apply for this opportunity.

- 3) **Question** The objectives for this grant opportunity is for supporting women and/or Afghan students and young professionals “in” Afghanistan. I wasn’t sure how to interpret if the implementation of program components could include bringing participants outside of Afghanistan for training and skill development?

Answer: The primary audience for this project is Afghans inside Afghanistan, particularly women and girls. We are open to reviewing project ideas that conduct activities outside Afghanistan, but we strongly prefer to fund a project that conducts most of its activities inside Afghanistan. This could include both virtual and in-person activities. The applicant may also include a limited number of activities involving Afghans in diaspora communities outside of Afghanistan for the purpose of establishing or maintaining networks and relationships for Afghans inside Afghanistan with their counterparts outside the country.

- 4) **Question:** We have attempted to procure a UEI from SAM.gov and have received the word that an "incident" has been opened, for "Entity not found." If you can let us know what other steps we must take, or whether an organization like us is not an appropriate applicant for this grant.

Answer: We welcome application from any eligible organization who is best positioned to achieve the objectives outlined in the NOFO. Regarding SAM.gov registration and UEI number, please visit [SAM.gov | Entity Registrations](#) and review the video tutorials as well as FAQs on the registration process and required documents. Also, you can check [Applicant Registration | GRANTS.GOV](#) which provides helpful information about the grants application process.

Please note, in order to be eligible to receive an award under this NOFO, organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number as well as a valid registration on [www.SAM.gov](#). If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application could be deemed ineligible.

- 5) **Question:** On page 5, the NOFO states that applicants must submit a security plan and organizational policy for operating in high-risk environments. If we do not intend to have program staff or hold in-person activities in Afghanistan and only anticipate that participants will engage in activities virtually from their homes, can we be exempt from submitting a security plan and organizational policy for operating in high-risk environments?

Answer: Due to the security climate in Afghanistan, we require all proposals to include a security plan to accompany appropriate programmatic elements within their proposal. The security plan could include measures that could minimize safety and security risk for the participants as well as the project staff. The security plan should be specific to the proposed project; the organization's policy for working in high-risk environments may be more general (i.e. not necessarily project specific) as it relates to the organization's overall security operational procedures.

- 6) **Question:** If we engage in virtual activities only, what are the expectations around digital security?

Answer: We defer to the potential applicant to suggest project ideas and strategies that address the program objectives outlined in this NOFO. There is no specific requirement related to digital security, but it would be prudent for applicants to consider measures that could minimize safety and security risks for the participants as well as the project staff.

When contemplating virtual-only activities, applicants should consider infrastructural realities such as limited internet availability and bandwidth and limited electricity in many areas of Afghanistan.

- 7) **Question:** On page 26, the NOFO includes branding requirements, including that, "training materials, materials for recipients or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under an agreement, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, and backdrops, podium signs, etc. must be marked appropriately with the standard, rectangular U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity." Can the applicant request a waiver on branding requirements due to safety and security concerns for program participants?

- a. Does the Embassy anticipate that a waiver of branding requirements will be warranted based on the scope of work?

Answer: Yes, upon the request from the prime recipient and with approval from the Grants Officer, a branding and marking waiver might be granted.

- 8) **Question:** Page 23 of the NOFO notes that awardees that are deemed to be high risk will be held to special award conditions. Does the Embassy anticipate that, based on the scope of work, the activity will be deemed to be high risk?

Answer: High risk designation is due to organizational, programmatic and or country risk identified in the risk assessment process.

- 9) **Question:** Has the Embassy determined which Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR) elements will be used for the award (page 24)?

Answer: Identifying the appropriate FADR elements is an internal Department process and requires no action from the grantee. However, as a condition of the funding source, the grantee will be required to track certain Department-mandated indicators. These indicators will be identified by Department of State personnel and agreed to by the grantee during the pre-award phase.

- 10) **Question:** Do you have any guidance or requirement for the option period(s)? Can we design it at our option as long as the option period(s) is reasonably related to the overall program design?

Answer: Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) anticipates supporting projects under this NOFO with a base period of performance of up to 36 months. For this opportunity, we do not require the applicants to submit budget for option periods, meaning additional time beyond the 36 months of the base period. However, contingent upon availability of additional funds, PDS may consider option period after successful implementation of the base period.

- 11) **Question:** On Page 2 of the NOFO, it mentioned that “This work will require a repositioning of new resources toward short-term virtual courses of study designed and delivered by U.S. universities—in fields such as business, information technology, law, allied health sciences, education, and other fields.” If we choose to propose work under Objective 1, must the courses be designed and delivered by U.S. universities? Or can the courses be designed by NGOs with established records of providing trainings for professionals?

Answer: This NOFO is not limited to U.S. universities; any organization including NGOs that meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the NOFO section C and D may develop and deliver trainings.

- 12) **Question:** Does the State Department cover the tuition/ fee for the program beneficiaries to be enrolled in higher education opportunities?

Answer: Providing tuition/fees under this NOFO is an allowable cost. It is the grantee’s responsibility to ensure any cost associated with the project activities are included in the proposal.

- 13) **Question:** On Page 3 of the NOFO, the three Project Objectives are listed in the order of Objective 1 --> Objective 3 --> Objective 2, is this a typo? Could you clarify which one is Objective 2 and which one is Objective 3?

Answer: Projects objectives are in the following order:

Objective 1: Equip Afghan professionals, primarily women, across various fields inside Afghanistan with additional skills needed in their career fields and support them to maintain and extend existing skills in an environment in which opportunities to use them professionally is limited.

Objective 2: Increase the ability of young Afghans in Afghanistan to access to higher education opportunities, in particular women and girls and those from marginalized and lower-income communities.

Objective 3: Increase connections between Afghan professionals inside Afghanistan and others in their field, both inside Afghanistan and in outside of Afghanistan, to share knowledge and opportunities.

- 14) **Question:** On Page 10 of the NOFO, Program Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (PMP) is listed as a component of the Proposal, which has a 20-page maximum limit. Is the PMP counted towards the total 20-page limit?

Answer: PMP and M&E document should be submitted as an attachment, and it is not counted toward the 20 -page narrative limit.

- 15) **Question:** Page 10 of the NOFO also states that: “If the proposal is from a prior grantee, the proposal discusses how the grantee has adapted, improved or otherwise modified their approach based on learning from previous experience.” How do you define a “prior grantee”? Does it mean a prior grantee from the Public Diplomacy Section, U.S. Mission to Afghanistan (Doha) particularly? Or a prior grantee from the U.S. Department of State? Or a prior grantee from any U.S. government agency?

Answer: In that section, “prior grantee” refers to organizations who have previously been awarded grants from the Public Diplomacy Section, U.S. Mission to Afghanistan (Doha).

- 16) **Question:** Is proof of non-profit status also required for sub-recipients?

Answer: Proof of non-profit status is only required if an applicant claim non-profit status, otherwise it is not a requirement for this NOFO. At the time of grants application, proof of non-profit status for the sub recipient is not required.

- 17) **Question:** On Page 10 of the NOFO, the Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative is limited to two pages. In Annex 2 on page 29, the template for the Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, the narrative is limited to one page. Could you clarify what the page limit is for the Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative?

Answer: The Monitoring and Evaluation narrative should not exceed one page.

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